



# *Family Dysfunction*

*Common Archetypes  
of Parents & Children*

# **FAMILY DYSFUNCTION**

## **Common Archetypes of Parents and Children**

### **CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION

FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

THE ARCHETYPES:

- A. The Controller vs. The Enabler
- B. Good Kid/Bad Kid
- C. Warped Sense of Opportunity
- D. Ego vs. Conscience
- E. Truth vs. Harmony
- F. The Drill Sergeant vs. The Conciliator
- G. Adoption
- H. The Manipulator

CONCLUSION

## INTRODUCTION

Hyde School began its mission to educate for character in 1966. By the mid-'70s, we realized the necessity of including parents in the curriculum. Today we believe that the parents are the primary teachers and that the home is the primary classroom. Over the course of our history, we have encountered hundreds of families and we have noticed that particular family dynamics repeatedly present themselves. This brochure is intended to describe some of these dynamics through the use of archetypes. Perhaps it is important to state what this brochure is **not**: It does not contend to state universal truths about these archetypes or about families in general. Instead, the intent is to report that which we have observed over the years. Hyde teachers are neither psychiatrists nor counselors in the formal therapeutic sense. Our school embarked, perhaps unknowingly, on an experiment of trial and error in search of a better way to educate with a focus on character. This brochure offers some of our findings in the hope that future families may benefit.

A problem with trying to explain any type of behavior is that one must label it for purposes of identification. Labeling can give rise to resentment or defensiveness. In the interest of simplification, a shorthand vernacular that describes some of the behaviors we encounter has naturally evolved at Hyde. That vernacular is utilized in this brochure. The intent is to inform, not offend. Personally, most of these dynamics were at work in my family of origin, to varying degrees, and I can see elements of them from my new perspective as a father. (I would suspect that I fail to recognize some of these elements as well!) Because the following archetypes refer to family dysfunction, the brochure begins with a few words about that term, a relatively recent one in the education lexicon.

## FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

Dysfunctional is a relative term. If we accept the idea that a dysfunctional family is any family that does not operate in an optimal manner for the maximum benefit of all family members, then we would probably have to conclude that all families are dysfunctional. It is obviously a matter of degree. When the contrived reality of home begins to bear little resemblance to the "real world" or when family members are unable to function productively in the real world, then we have a family that is seriously dysfunctional. In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge tells

the story of "The Parable of the Boiled Frog." Place a frog in a pot of boiling water and the frog will try to scramble out of the pot. However, if you place it in a pot of water at room temperature and then turn the heat up, the frog will do nothing, gradually becoming drowsy. Ultimately, the frog will sit in the pot until it dies. Why will it put forth no resistance to its impending death? Because the frog is only capable of responding to wild fluctuations in its environment.

Many families function like the frog. For example, parents might very well react aggressively if their child, in a single marking period, went from straight As to straight Fs. However, the same parents will likely react more passively if this change occurs over a period of two years. This family's collective understanding of what is normal changes so gradually that the change is not perceived. The result: a new understanding sneaks up on the family. This new understanding of what is normal is typically accompanied by lower standards of expectation. The gradual decline continues and the family dysfunction grows. Family dysfunction seems to evolve for two reasons: (1) a family lacks a real vision; and/or (2) a family lacks an objective way to measure its performance against that vision. In either case, a family can expect to develop a distorted view of what is normal.

Family dysfunction also seems related to issues of control in the family. Consider the following adage, a popular one at Hyde:

"We cannot control how others react to us;  
we can only control how we react to them."

All the family dysfunction that I have witnessed in my career as an educator can be traced to a root cause that involves someone's refusal to follow the wisdom in this simple statement. Someone in the family makes the mistake of trying to control how someone else acts. Consider, for example, a problem drinker in the family. As a concerned family member, I can choose to control the effects that that drinking will have on me. However, I can neither control that drinking nor can I control the effect that the drinking will have on the drinker. The impulse to want to control these factors seems to be a natural one. In fact, most Al-Anon people will tell you that the typical person initially joins Al-Anon because he or she wants to stop a loved one from drinking. Al-Anon teaches that we cannot stop a loved one from drinking. Not only that, we cannot control what that drinking is doing to our loved one(s). We can, however, control what that drinking is doing to us.

When we work with Hyde families who are having difficulties, we seek to help each family member live by the wisdom of the aforementioned saying. In the Hyde admissions interview we sometimes encounter a student with a very negative attitude and an extremely exasperated Mom and Dad. I will then ask the family to identify the person in the room who is **most** concerned about Johnny's bad attitude. There will be a pause as Mom and Dad strive to determine which one of them is most concerned. Generally, one parent will be identified. Then I will ask, "O.K. Who in the room is **least** concerned with Johnny's attitude?" The parents instantaneously point their fingers at Johnny. No substantial progress will occur until Johnny becomes the family member who is most concerned about Johnny's attitude. Johnny needs to become **more** involved with his own growth; his parents need to become **less** involved. Johnny is perfectly content to let his parents accept the responsibility that he should be accepting. While parents are expected to participate in the Hyde program alongside their children, they ironically must typically learn opposite lessons: the children must learn to "hang on" when the going gets tough; the parents must learn to "let go."

## THE ARCHETYPES

### A. The Controller vs. The Enabler

Geno Ring, a local substance abuse counselor who works with Hyde students, conducts a very interesting role-playing exercise. He tapes off a 10' x 12' rectangle in our auditorium and then asks for five volunteers to represent a mother, a father, and three children. He asks the five participants to imagine that the 10' x 12' rectangle is a life raft and that they are afloat on the ocean. Geno explains that the raft is very tippy and that each family member must constantly be aware of where the others are positioned so that it will not tip over. To add to this scenario, he hands a whiskey bottle to one of the five, whom he instructs to act oblivious to the circumstances and to stagger aimlessly around the raft. Then the entire school community watches with amusement as the four remaining participants try to keep the "raft" steady. I have watched this exercise a number of times and the same thing invariably occurs: The four non-drinkers scurry around the raft, ever mindful of the actions of the "drunk" as they try to maintain balance. It is even more interesting to consider the reactions that do **not** occur:

- (1) I have never seen the drinker thrown off the raft.
- (2) I have never seen the non-drinkers jump off the raft as if to "swim" to safety.
- (3) I have never seen the drinker physically restrained by the other four participants.

In short, the drinker is not confronted and the other four participants work around him or her. The family typically enacts the dynamic of **The Controller vs. The Enabler**. One individual takes the lead and the enablers follow along, allowing the drinker to remain in a state of oblivion, taking no responsibility for the circumstances and the dynamics that result. That often happens to families in which alcohol is a problem. However, the controller/enabler dynamic is not limited to drinking.

Often one parent will be a successful professional and the other will be home taking care of the household and the children. The more successful the professional parent, the less time spent on the family. The more the homemaker maintains the home, the less interaction occurs with the other spouse. The parent at home often fails to challenge the other parent and the two resign themselves to a common understanding of roles and responsibilities. Let's add some behavioral problems on the part of one of the children. The common response is for the professional parent to try to control the problem and the homemaker to acquiesce to this control. (However, it can also operate in reverse.) As the problem intensifies, the controller kicks in with more control and the enabler will strive to facilitate whatever conditions the controller mandates. Once these issues are examined, it often occurs that the enabler harbors deep-seated resentment regarding the arrangement. The dynamic, if left unchecked, will inflame the problems and, worst of all, the children will likely carry this dynamic into adulthood, establishing it in their own marriages and families.

### B. Good Kid/Bad Kid

In the somewhat schmaltzy film "Saturday Night Fever" (any doubts about this being a scholarly brochure can now be completely dismissed!), there is a scene where the older brother returns home to the family after quitting the priesthood. His parents are beside themselves with disappointment. The younger son (John Travolta) is shocked by his brother's fallibility because he, himself, has been unable to derive genuine self-confidence from the only thing he seems

to do well: disco dancing. In the touching moment in the upstairs bedroom, Travolta surprisingly shows that he is happy with his brother's decision, "Because," he reasons, "if you ain't so good then maybe I ain't so bad."

Some families seek Hyde because they have a teenage boy or girl acting in a rebellious fashion at home or as the underachiever at school. At the admissions interview, we ask parents in this predicament to consider their own roles as contributors to the problems they now encounter. We sometimes receive a disturbing response that goes something like, "Well, our older son is a Dean's List student at an Ivy League university..." Such parents feel that because they've raised an older (or younger) successful son or daughter, they should be removed from scrutiny as part of the problem they now face with the child they have brought to the Hyde interview. Perhaps comparative success in the eyes of others is truly what the family values. Perhaps the parents are unwilling to examine the notion that this is what they truly value. This family may have difficulty with Hyde because Hyde represents a shift away from the traditional education paradigm, a paradigm that places primary value on talent and success. Hyde works from a new paradigm, one that honors character and fulfillment.

We often find a parent willing to apply our character fulfillment paradigm to the child who is not doing well but unwilling to apply it to the child who is the "apple" of Mom's or Dad's eye. The "good kid's" success might be rewarded with immunity from attitude prosecution. The "bad kid," once enrolled at Hyde, may perceive that Mom and Dad are only paying lip service to this character "stuff" the school is espousing. He may also sense a latent hypocrisy at work: the "bad kid" knows that his "good kid" brother has some very negative attitudes but, because he's successful, Mom and Dad either don't see these attitudes or don't want to see them. Sometimes the parents are oblivious to this hypocrisy, but their children -- both "good" and "bad" -- hear it loud and clear and intuitively act in accordance with it.

The good kid realizes that he can maintain substantial affection and adulation (sometimes even material reward) by maintaining an edge by merely staying three or four jumps ahead of the bad kid. He may not be any closer to his personal best than the bad kid, but he will remain free of parental scorn. The bad kid, on the other hand, is faced with a seemingly perpetual lifetime sentence of comparison with his good sibling, where he will never be better than second best. He then realizes that there is one foolproof way for him to maintain his parents' attention: by acting out as the bad kid in royal fashion.

(Although the masculine pronoun is used here, we have observed that the **good kid/bad kid** archetype is found in all gender combinations.)

Traditionally, American schools have sought to develop student talent in order for their students to be admitted to better colleges and then be successful in later life. Hyde focuses on character with the hope that its students will eventually feel personally fulfilled. Families need to take the same leap of faith in order to reap the full benefit of the Hyde education. Parents often arrive at Hyde's doorstep with the child who is not developing his or her talents and is certainly not being successful. They may buy into Hyde's belief in character and fulfillment because they genuinely see it as a better way for the bad kid. (Not to mention, as necessary in order to gain admission to Hyde.) However, they may fail to see that the philosophy also applies to the good kid. There is a hypocrisy inherent in this double standard (Message to both kids: "We will only require you to address your character when you're having problems.") that must be addressed before any of the family members will have genuine success at Hyde.

We at Hyde doubt the correlation between success in school and ultimate fulfillment and success in life. In fact, we have known the **good kid/bad kid** roles to reverse themselves ten years or so in the future. The good kid can have problems once he or she realizes that life has a different set of standards than school or home, while the bad kid may rise to the top because of what was learned in facing the problems he or she had as a youth. After all, the one thing the bad kid did learn was how to operate when the chips were down. Too often the good kid has been taught to **avoid** any circumstances that could bring the chips down. (e.g. In the interest of protecting a grade point average, the good kid might be induced to drop an especially difficult course, thereby forfeiting the immense value gained by facing the challenge of that course.) Therefore, the good kid may never learn how to make a "comeback" from failure. Perhaps my biggest personal disagreement with traditional education is that it seems to place almost no value on failure. It can actually encourage kids to avoid those circumstances that might result in failure. All too often, these kids are being taught to start building impressive resumes at age fourteen.

The **good kid/bad kid** dynamic has further negative implications. Sometimes we see the well-intentioned sympathetic parent who arrives at Hyde's doorstep with a bad kid and says, "Johnny needs a boarding school environment where he can get out of the shadow of

his superstar brother. After all, his brother has been a tough act to follow." On the surface, this reasoning appears sound. However, I have come to conclude that perhaps the only thing worse than a tough act to follow is an easy act to follow. Sometimes the first child can be a living hell for the family and for teachers. In this case, the second child may be heaped with congratulations simply for being normal or for not being as bad as the other brother or sister. This child learns that it is not necessary to pursue personal excellence, it is only necessary to remain a few jumps ahead of the bad kid. The irony is that the good kid will often be less equipped for the future than the bad kid, who has at least been out experimenting with different types of behavior.

I fear for our nation if our children continue to be taught within the framework of the "talent/success" paradigm. I don't really believe there is such a thing as a good kid or a bad kid. For that matter, I don't believe that there are gifted and talented kids either. I have encountered many students who I have been told are learning disabled, others who were even proclaimed unteachable. I have watched them respond with uncanny insight and understanding in situations in the classroom, on the athletic field, or on the performing arts stage, causing me to reject those labels. These labels may fit when the students who labor under them are compared against a contrived reality that our schools have established. However, I have also seen these labels undermine the concept of unique potential.

### C. Warped Sense of Opportunity

As strange as it seems, sometimes teenagers discover that they have a better chance of receiving opportunities as a reward for abhorrent behavior than as a result of doing their best. I have encountered students who have attended two or three boarding schools and others who have been in one or two rehabs. These kids have not received these opportunities because they've earned them in a productive fashion. They've received them as the result of negative behavior. Chances are they have "defaulted" on their own adolescent development, sensing that their parents will accept responsibility for them, that their parents will always be waiting with a safety net. The tragedy is that these teenagers will often carry this **warped sense of opportunity** into their adult lives. Home is a contrived reality. If parents are not careful, we can set up a home reality that bears little resemblance to the outside world. If kids attempt to apply this **warped sense of opportunity** to the outside world, they will be squashed.

Yet that is precisely what they will do because that is what they will have been taught.

We are most successful with students whose parents make a commitment to the letter and spirit of our program. However, one group of students constitutes the exception that proves the rule: those students from our city scholarship programs. Hyde has long participated in scholarship programs with agencies in New York City and Washington, D.C. At face value, these students would appear ill-equipped to succeed at Hyde. Their skills are typically weaker than other Hyde students. Many come from homes where the parents speak little English (I remember a Hyde teacher who once said of a student, "He thinks in Spanish yet speaks in English.") and very few of the parents have experienced the benefit of higher education. Typically, these students come from single-parent households and experience culture shock when they arrive in Maine, a state that is 99.5 percent white. The parents of these students have not traditionally participated fully in our family program. While we strive to bring Hyde and this group of parents together, we have been very successful with their children. Consider the higher education experiences of our Washington, D.C. graduates:

- B.A. Hobart College - Martin Luther King Scholar  
Villanova Law School
- B.A. University of Western Illinois  
Basketball & Football Scholarship  
(Currently teaching and coaching at  
Hyde School)
- B.A. University of Maryland
- B.A. M.B.A. San Francisco State University  
Harvard Business School & M.I.T.,  
Sloan School of Management
- B.A. Northeastern University
- B.A. Tufts University

Each one of these students may have gotten off to a slow academic start at Hyde, but each one also had a very healthy understanding of opportunity. They were sometimes perplexed by the number of unearned opportunities that some of their Hyde peers had received. They came from a world where hard work might be rewarded with

**no** opportunities. They absolutely knew that one received nothing as a result of mediocre, much less abhorrent, behavior. As an educator, I can't stress enough how important it is for teenagers to earn their opportunities and how important it is for them to feel the consequences of their own mistakes. If we teach kids that they will receive opportunities regardless of whether they do their best or their worst, we will teach them a formula for life that will ultimately backfire on them, perhaps after that inevitable day comes when we -- parents and teachers -- won't be around to cushion the blows.

#### D. Ego vs. Conscience - "I have a problem" vs. "I am a problem"

In our efforts to offer a character-based education, Hyde has become recognized nationally as particularly adept at working with so-called problem kids. Our success in this regard has been featured on national network programs such as TODAY, DONAHUE, and 60 MINUTES. As a result, we sometimes encounter the "fix-it" family: a family having difficulties with a teenager may mistake Hyde, something which requires a long-term total commitment, for a shortcut to family problem solving. At the admissions interview, we explore family attitudes about truth and character. Parents sometimes perceive that the only way to have their problems solved (i.e., get their kid admitted) is to play along with these wild-eyed idealists and agree to try a program that will require them to honestly and openly address family issues.

Then the son or daughter enrolls in the school and growth occurs. Grades improve, the student participates in performing arts productions, and gets in excellent physical condition on our athletic teams. (NOTE: Parent participation has been known to wane as student performance improves.) After a year, the family might thank us and return home. The student often returns to former ways in short order. In these instances, the school has been at cross purposes with the parents. A student's poor performance at school may well be due to deeper issues within the family. We ask the parents to suspend their belief that the problem is their son or daughter and instead consider the notion that there is a deeper issue within the family that is currently being expressed through this particular family member. At Hyde, we try to look beyond outward evidence of success (e.g., standardized test scores, grades, awards, and sports records) and instead try to develop positive attitudes. A family may come to Hyde and think, "Well, what have we got to lose? Let's try this attitude thing for a while." Secretly the parents may hold onto

the preoccupation with awards and grades. We then end up at cross purposes. The school is stressing character development but the kid knows (The kids **always** know the true motivations of their parents!) that Mom and/or Dad are not in it for the long haul. The student will then gauge his or her efforts accordingly.

Every person and every family experiences personal problems. Consider the distinction between "I **have** a problem" and "I **am** a problem." In the first statement, the individual may not view solving the problem as a means to an end, may not connect the solution to a higher purpose. Thus, the problem will inevitably be viewed as a negative. A student might think, "My life would be perfect if not for these low grades." A parent might think, "Our family would be perfect if only my son/daughter would get off drugs." Problems in this context are viewed as things to be avoided and can result in narrow horizons and/or lower expectations. (i.e. One way to avoid problems would be to try less or to accept a lesser lot in life.) A family tied to its **ego** more than its **conscience** often perceives that it "**has**" a problem. A commitment to Unique Potential encourages one to perceive that "I **am** a problem" to myself if I truly want to connect with my destiny. Problems are an inevitable occasional outcome of our attempts to go after our respective bests. In this context, problems are not the object of shame, they are the signs of our attempts to be all that we can be. Life then finds us setting new goals and facing new problems as we strive to meet those goals, and so on. Problems become viewed as reflections of conscience. This is not to minimize problems. It's just that we don't dwell on problems at Hyde. We have learned that it is more fruitful to focus on high goals accompanied by high expectations. In such an environment, individuals must "let go" of problem behavior. A focus on problem behavior doesn't always translate into high goals. Perhaps it's fair to say that in character education, problems take a back seat to goals.

#### E. Truth vs. Harmony

**Truth vs. Harmony** is a variation of **The Controller vs. The Enabler**. We might see this dynamic at work in the checkout counter at the supermarket. A little boy or girl may spy a colorful book with Big Bird on the cover and asks Mom to purchase the book. At first, Mom refuses. (Lest anyone accuse me of pointing a finger at others, rest assured that I have faced this Big Bird dilemma a number of times with my own daughters at our local supermarket!) The child begins to protest and the mother becomes acutely aware of the fact that several heads in the supermarket have turned in her direction in

the hope of catching a floor show. The child seems to realize that the spotlight is on her and responds by throwing a tantrum. The **truth vs. harmony** molecule is now isolated. Mom can achieve "harmony" by purchasing Big Bird; however, she knows that this doesn't honor "truth," especially when she realizes that the family already owns thirty-two Big Bird books at home. This relatively cute scenario can later manifest itself in some ugly scenarios for families.

Let's return to the alcohol variable. Dad works very hard to keep his business going and to maintain a high standard of living for the family. He likes to come home at 7:00 or 8:00 every night and have a few drinks. It shuts him off from the family. His wife is very concerned about this habit and has challenged him on it a few times. Arguments have ensued, which have frightened the children. The wife reasons that the outcome of confronting her husband has created more problems than she would have had if she had just let it go. She chooses harmony and we're back afloat on Geno Ring's life raft.

The biggest problem with dysfunctional families is that their perception of what is normal can become incredibly distorted. We might begin with the tantrum that Johnny pulls whenever Dad asks him to mow the lawn. Dad realizes that it's easier to mow the lawn himself; Johnny learns that a tantrum will get him what he wants. (And we have **the controller** and **the enabler** all over again.) I have seen this same dynamic evolve to the point where Dad ends up asking Johnny if it's okay to use the car. To return to our original definition of dysfunction, in this instance, Dad fully accepts that he cannot control how Johnny reacts to him. However, he goes too far, in that he has decided that it's not even worth it to control how he reacts to Johnny. Johnny will likely carry these same issues to his own family in the future. **Truth** and **harmony** are perpetual issues examined in our Family Learning Center at Hyde School. Our experience tells us that most family problems can be traced to issues of truth.

At a typical Hyde Parents Weekend we ask the question, "How would you like your family to grow in the future?" The most common answer: "We would like to have better communication in our family." Families then pledge to have dinner together or agree to share in a family outing one weekend a month, etc. These are all laudable goals, ones we encourage. However, this approach generally skirts the issue. Rarely is communication the problem. The problem is usually a lack of truth, which manifests itself in symptoms symbolic of poor communication. As a rule of thumb, greater commitment to truth will result in better communication. Our experience has been that the converse is not as true.

## F. The Drill Sergeant vs. The Conciliator

In another variation of **The Controller vs. The Enabler**, one parent becomes angered by unacceptable behavior and dispenses harsh discipline intended as a deterrent. Our experience has been that the father is most often the controller and the mother tends to be the enabler. There is less of a pattern to **The Drill Sergeant vs. The Conciliator**. Generally, in this dynamic one parent tends to offset the other. Dad might think, "Well, since Mom seems to be very harsh with the children, I'll respond by being their friend." Sometimes the arrangement is an intentional one and at other times not, but in either case this dynamic creates conditions ripe for manipulation by the children. The children will inevitably play one parent off against the other. Ultimately, the children learn to identify discipline with personalities rather than principles.

## G. Adoption

In the admissions interview we always ask adopted children, "How do you feel about being adopted?" The response is almost always the same, "Oh, it's not an issue." Sometimes even the parents will intercede and assure the interviewer and their own child that it's not an issue. To project ahead four or five months after the student is enrolled, we almost invariably find that it is indeed an issue. That which we know about adoption pales in comparison to that which we do not know. We have observed that it is important for families to operate as though an adopted child is loved as much as a natural child would be loved. This is both understandable and admirable. At the same time, many families of adopted children are fearful of what their true feelings are about this issue. They might examine the feelings they have toward their natural-born child, if they have one, with greater scrutiny than they apply to their adopted child. This can create problems for the adopted child, the greatest being that the child never examines his or her own deepest feelings about being adopted.

Some of the angriest kids I have encountered have been those of biracial or multiracial adoptions. Some of this has to do with the fact that the adoption issue has not been adequately discussed. More than that, we have often discovered that parents in these circumstances play a unique role in which both are conciliators and neither plays drill sergeant. It is almost as if the parents are saying, "Not only is this child likely to feel unwanted by his or her natural parents; this fact will be blatantly obvious to the child's friends at school and, in

fact, to anyone who encounters our family.” Families with biracial or multiracial adoption generally do not possess the option of disclosing the adoption whenever the family sees fit to do so. Thus, the parents will sometimes respond as if to say, “We’re going to overcompensate for the fact that this child may feel intense abandonment in a world of racial discrimination.” They may then indulge the child or refrain from exacting discipline. The irony of this dynamic is that children in these circumstances frequently reserve their most bitter feelings for their adoptive parents, the very people who have tried to help them the most. This is because they intuitively know that their parents are establishing some sort of double standard for them and they resent it.

## H. The Manipulator

We assume that manipulation is a learned behavior, one that can be unlearned with good parenting and good teaching. In this context, the child has learned to manipulate the parents with satisfactory results. However, the same child will inevitably learn as an adult that manipulation doesn’t work as well at school or in the workplace. When that child is unable to cope with the adult world, he or she very frequently looks for someone to blame; that person is inevitably Mom and/or Dad. Those who learn to benefit from manipulation will inevitably wind up despising those who taught them to manipulate.

I often use the analogy of the dentist. There are few things I dislike more than the uncertainty of what might happen at the dentist’s office. As a young boy, I would scream and cry in an effort to convince my mother to not make me go. I soon learned that my protests were futile and I went along with the requirement. However, what if I had learned that my protests could be successful? Although I intellectually would have known that I needed to go to the dentist, I probably would have used my manipulative powers to get out of doing so. Aside from the distorted reality that would have resulted in my house, I would have ended up with a very poor set of teeth. It is likely that I would have blamed my parents for my problems because I would have known that if my parents had held a hard line, my teeth would be in better shape.

The moral of the story of **The Manipulator**? If you value harmony over truth, you will end up regretting it. New teachers must face what I call the “like vs. respect” dilemma. Inevitably, they must

choose between whether they want the kids to like or respect them. If they choose the former, they will end up with neither. If they choose the latter, there is a good chance they will get both. I believe that the same is true of parenting.

## CONCLUSION

Consider this exchange that once took place between a reporter and the great cellist Pablo Casals when the latter was 95 years old:

Reporter: “Mr. Casals, you’re 95 and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you practice six hours a day?”

Casals: “Because I think I’m making **progress**.”

The healthiest families are ones who view family building and character development the same way that Pablo Casals viewed playing the cello. Because this brochure focuses on common family problems, it regrettably has taken on a somewhat negative tone. One could easily get the impression that Hyde exists primarily as a place where families go to address problems. On the contrary, it is a place where families go to become all that they can be. Just as we believe that every individual has a unique potential, we also believe that every family is awaited by a fulfilling destiny. While Hyde is a place where families can address problems, it is also a place where strong families can become stronger. Character development is a lifelong process.

Daniel Webster once noted that if he had to teach vocabulary, he would spend 90 percent of his time on a student’s attitude and the remaining 10 percent on the actual words. Similarly, if I had one work day to teach character, I would spend seven hours with the parents and bring the child in for a one-hour summary. Character education cannot be limited to an educational site; it must be developed within a context. The Hyde campus offers numerous human and physical resources such as computers, labs, good teachers, a gymnasium, a high ropes course, and a library. However, if the values at school and those at home are not in concert with each other — much less at odds with each other — then students will receive less than the maximum benefit no matter how impressive our facilities might be. The high ropes course might foster courage and risk-taking, but if the child goes home to a dysfunctional family where these qualities are not valued, he or she cannot possibly receive the maximum benefit of the ropes course. Think of the value if the

parent experienced the ropes course **with** the child. Many Hyde families do just that.

This brochure began with a discussion of the importance of a family's need for a vision and a way to stay on track with that vision. Hyde students, parents, and teachers strive to focus on three essential questions:

Who am I?  
Where am I going with my life?  
How do I get there?

Optimal character education occurs when people make the commitment to address these questions. The end result can be a whole that is infinitely greater than the sum of its parts.

**Malcolm W. Gauld  
1993**

**Hyde School  
616 High Street  
Bath, Maine 04530  
(207) 443-5584**